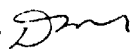


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COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 15, 1999 (BOS Mtg. 12/1/99)
TO: York County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Daniel M. Stuck, County Administrator 
SUBJECT: Application No. UP-552-99, The Storing Crew

ISSUE:

Application No. UP-552-99 requests a special use permit pursuant to Section 24.1-306 (Category 14, No. 6) to authorize the construction of a mini-storage warehouse facility adjacent to the Shady Banks shopping center on the south side of Hampton Highway (Route 134) at its intersection with Gable Way. The parcel is further identified as Assessor's Parcel No. 38A1-(9)-E.

DESCRIPTION

- Property Owner: American General
- Location: Adjacent to the Shady Banks shopping center
- Area: 3.91 acres
- Frontage: Approximately 330 feet on Hampton Highway (Route 134)
- Utilities: Public water and sewer
- Topography: Flat
- 2015 Land Use Map Designation: General Business
- Zoning Classification: GB – General Business
- Existing Development: None
- Surrounding Development:
 - North: Hampton Highway; Sherwood Forest neighborhood beyond
 - East: Gable Way; Gables of York quadruplexes beyond
 - South: Gables of York quadruplexes
 - West: Shady Banks shopping center
- Proposed Development: 69,100-square-foot mini-storage warehouse facility

CONSIDERATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

1. The applicant is requesting a special use permit to construct a mini-storage warehouse facility on 3.9 acres adjacent to the Shady Banks shopping center along Hampton Highway (Route 134). The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as General Business in recognition of the shopping center; accordingly, the parcel is zoned GB – General Business. The applicant proposes to construct approximately 70,000 square feet of storage space contained within nine storage buildings and an office and manager's residence building. The subject parcel is within the established Shady Banks commercial node and is zoned for general business uses.
2. Mini-storage facilities provide a service to nearby residents, but any request to establish a mini-storage facility along Route 134, which is a greenbelt corridor, should be accompanied by outstanding aesthetic and site treatments above and beyond what is currently in existence in this area. Since the subject parcel is close to many residential developments, the applicant has made an attempt to offer a superior aesthetic package. While it is not possible to completely disguise a mini-storage warehouse facility as such, the applicant has submitted an aesthetically pleasing design. The gabled roof design and variations in roof height, coupled with attractive building materials and colors help break the monotony of the perimeter walls. In addition, the applicant has offered to extend the façade along all sides of the development. I believe that it is of the utmost importance to present an aesthetically pleasing image along all sides of the development to ensure that residents and motorists are not subjected to an unabated view of a warehouse facility. Should the Board choose to approve this application, conditions have been included to make certain that the façade is constructed as it is depicted in the conceptual drawings. Since outward-facing storage doors will ruin the aesthetics of any mini-storage facade, staff has also included a condition to ensure that there are no storage doors that directly face the outside of the mini-storage warehouse facility.
3. The applicant has indicated that the electronic security system that will be used for the development will make security fencing (i.e., razor wire, barbed wire, etc.) unnecessary. Like outward-facing storage doors, installation of perimeter fencing has the potential to ruin an otherwise attractive façade by creating a prison-like atmosphere. Any fencing needed for the portion of the development that faces the shopping center and gaps in the façade will be a black, wrought iron style fence. The use of this fence style in limited amounts will avoid creating the illusion of a guarded prison while still providing a reasonable measure of protection for the warehouses. In addition, a condition precluding the use of any type of security fencing has been included in the approving resolution.
4. In a further effort to make the development more appealing, the applicant has offered to share the existing shopping center entrance (thereby eliminating the need for an additional entrance to Route 134). A strategy of the *Transportation* element of the Comprehensive Plan is to “limit the numbers and types of direct access to the roadway network,” and this is particularly true of Route 134. The applicant’s offer to share the existing Shady Banks entrance is advantageous on several levels: one fewer entrance

to Route 134 is constructed, the proposed development becomes visually associated with the Shady Banks shopping center, and an unbroken greenbelt buffer can be maintained along the parcel's Route 134 frontage. The visual association with the shopping center and continuous buffer along Route 134 are important factors that will help mitigate the aesthetic difference between an undeveloped, wooded parcel and a mini-storage warehouse facility. With the installation of similar species of landscape plants and the sharing of an entrance, the warehouses will seem more like an extension of the shopping center rather than an out-of-character stand-alone facility. If this application is approved, a condition precluding direct access to Route 134 will ensure that the existing shopping center entrance is used to access the warehouses.

5. Despite the relatively attractive nature of the façade, staff feels that heavily landscaped buffers should be employed to further mitigate the view of the warehouses from adjacent properties and Route 134. As noted earlier, Hampton Highway is designated a greenbelt road; accordingly, a 35-foot buffer left in its natural state must be maintained along the road frontage. This parcel is heavily wooded and the 35-foot greenbelt will provide a good visual buffer along Hampton Highway. Because the adjacent property to the east and south is residentially zoned, the applicant will have to provide a Type-25 (25-foot) transitional buffer along these borders. These buffers are in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance regulations, but they do not offer a buffer comparable to what will be provided along the Route 134 frontage. Establishing a Type-25 transitional buffer along Gable Way would require planting 44 trees whereas a Type-35 would require 54 trees. It appears that the 25-foot buffer distance will provide an adequate buffer, but that the planting ratios of a Type-35 transitional buffer should be used in lieu of the Type-25 buffer ratios. This will provide 10 additional trees along Gable Way and should help mitigate the view of the warehouse facility from this attractive entrance to the Gables of York. There is concern that many of the Gables residents will face the rear of the warehouse facility. While the applicant has indicated that the façade will be extended along all sides, it is recommended that additional landscape plantings be established along the rear of the warehouses since many of the Gables residents will overlook this portion of the development. As is the case with the eastern edge of the property, the applicant will be required to provide a Type-25 transitional buffer, which will require planting 18 trees along the rear of the parcel. Because several units overlook this section of the development, it would appear that the planting ratios of a Type-50 transitional buffer should be used within the 25-foot buffer area. Use of the Type-50 transitional buffer-planting ratio will require 52 trees as opposed to the required 18. Finally, the breaks in the façade necessitated by the Zoning Ordinance regulations that limit storage building length to 200 feet will allow unmitigated views of the interior of the development. Should this application be approved, a condition to plant additional evergreen screening plants (i.e., Leyland Cypress) directly in front of the façade breaks has been included. These additional plantings should help mitigate the view of the development from the adjacent roadways and neighborhood while providing above-average landscape details.
6. Mini-storage warehouse facilities do not necessarily further the economic development goals set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. The subject parcel's large

size makes it capable of supporting various commercial activities, any number of which would likely represent a greater fiscal benefit to the County. Additionally, there are relatively few unimproved commercial parcels along Route 134 and the addition of a mini-storage warehouse facility effectively removes one parcel from a small, select group. The subject parcel has been on the market for several years, however, and several stores in the adjacent shopping center are vacant, suggesting that the Shady Banks area may not attract any new commercial development in the near future.

7. Mini-storage warehouses do not generate a large amount of traffic; in fact, the traffic generated by the proposed warehouses will most likely be less than what would be generated by any other commercial use. Use of the existing shopping center entrance will provide a safe, convenient access for the additional traffic and will not decrease the level of service on Route 134. In addition, the site has adequate room to accommodate the parking requirements (1.5 spaces per unit plus two for the manager residence) as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.
8. The applicant has provided a representative picture of the ground-mounted monument sign typically used at his mini-storage facilities. This type of sign is more visually appealing than a pole-mounted sign and a condition is included limiting the sign to a ground-mounted monument-style. The representative picture depicts an internally illuminated sign mounted atop a stone foundation. Staff believes that the sign would be more attractive if the stone foundation completely encased the internally lit sign. The applicant has agreed to the alteration, and a condition relating to the change has been included in the proposed resolution.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

During a public hearing on November 9, 1999, a spokesman for The Gables of York County Association stated that the homeowners he represents are not opposed to the use as long as the applicant develops the project as it is proposed. The spokesman for 18 Sherwood Forest homeowners spoke against approval. The Planning Commission subsequently recommended approval by a roll call vote of 4:2 (Messrs. Beil and Simasek opposing).

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION

Mini-storage warehouse facilities, regardless of their location, represent a fiscal loss to the County when compared to what might have been located at that particular site in their stead. They do provide a service to residents and businesses in the area and, judging by the many past inquiries, the Route 134 corridor represents an untapped market. An application for a mini-storage warehouse facility along Route 134 was brought before the Board at its August 4, 1999 meeting. As the Board will recall, that application involved rezoning property from a residential to a commercial designation in addition to a use permit. Noting the Comprehensive Plan's emphasis on promoting nodal rather than strip commercial development along the Route 134 corridor and mini-storage warehouses' lack of a significant fiscal benefit to the County (among other issues), staff recommended

denial and the Board subsequently denied the application. The fact that the subject parcel does not need to be rezoned to accommodate the warehouse facility suggests that this may be a superior site when compared to the site of the previous application. It is difficult to completely hide any mini-storage facility from all sides; consequently, a visually pleasing façade is necessary to try to make it blend in with the surrounding area. The applicant has made admirable attempts to go beyond the typical requirements and has made this an attractive facility. Elimination of the direct access to Route 134, extending the attractive façade around *all* sides of the development, and landscaping *beyond* what is required by the Zoning Ordinance help mitigate the view of the property from all areas. *It is evident that developers will continue to try to exploit the apparent "hole" in the Route 134 market until something is sited in the area.* This appears to be an aesthetically pleasing design and to offer the best opportunity to satiate the appetite for mini-storage in the area while maintaining a superior visual landscape along the corridor.

I recommend approval of this application through the adoption of Resolution R99-215.

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Attachments

- Excerpts from unapproved minutes of Planning Commission meeting 11/9/99
- Zoning Map
- Concept Plan dated October 24, 1999
- Photographs of existing facilities (2)
- Proposed Resolution R99-215